

State Senator • Deb Cherry news

08/03



For The Constituents of the 26th District

A Note From Senator Cherry

Dear Friends,

My first seven months as your State Senator have been very exciting. I wanted to take this opportunity to give you an update on the state budget process and let you know what I've been working on as we finish up the first half of this year's legislative session. As you are undoubtedly aware, the financial situation in our state and our nation is challenging right now. The decline in the national economy, coupled with a state budget deficit of nearly \$1.7 billion, has put our state in a precarious fiscal position. When we got here in January, we knew we would be faced with difficult decisions when it came to balancing the budget for fiscal year 2004. However, Governor Granholm has laid out a sound and responsible plan to get us back to fiscal stability and continued economic growth. The budget agreement passed by the Legislature in July was fiscally responsible—making government lean, but not mean.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Minority Vice Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittees on Higher Education and on Community Health, I was involved on a daily basis with the budget debates and can tell you that it was not an easy process. The debates were very impassioned, as I'm sure you can imagine. It's difficult when there is such a large deficit because we must make cuts to programs that we feel are very important. With this budget, the Governor and the Legislature were able to erase a historic budget deficit and craft a compromise that will protect our families and educate our children.

I am excited about some upcoming Town Hall meetings that are scheduled in September. The focus of the meetings will be how to save for college tuition. We will have guest speakers who will discuss financial aid programs through both the state and through individual universities. I also have coffee hours scheduled and am looking forward to hearing your input on the issues we are tackling in Lansing, as well as anything else you would like to discuss. Details on the Town Hall meetings and coffee hours are on the back of the newsletter. I look forward to seeing you at both!

Deb Cherry
State Senator • 26th District

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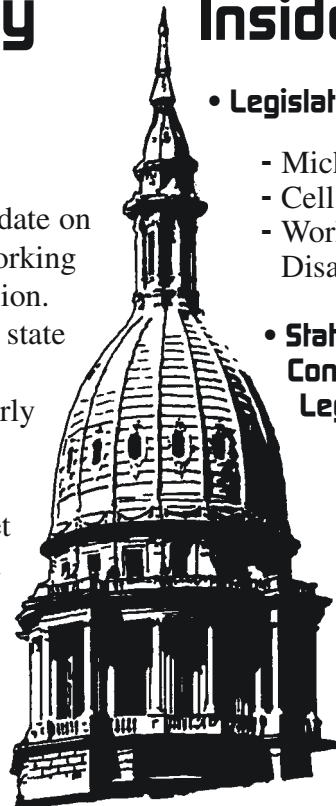
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Clip and Save

Legislative Update

I have sponsored or co-sponsored over 75 bills during this current legislative session. Below are brief summaries of some of those pieces of legislation.

Schools Empowered to Determine Their Own Cell Phone Policies

The Governor signed into law this summer a bill that will allow Michigan schools to set their own cell phone policies for students. The bill was a House version of my cell phone legislation passed earlier this year in the Senate.

The new legislation allows school districts to determine what policy on pagers, cell phones, and other devices is appropriate for their community. It will eliminate the

current prohibition on cell phones in schools beginning with the 2004-2005 school year.

The state ban on pocket pagers, cell phones, and other electronic communication devices was put in place when pagers and cell phones were fairly new and, in

many cases, being used for drug sales. The times have changed since then and now these devices are used to help parents keep in touch with their children throughout the day and after school. School officials should be able to formulate their own individual policies that meet the needs of their students and parents.



Freedom to Work for Persons With Disabilities



Senator Cherry with Mike Zelley, Executive Director of the Disability Network, at the signing of Senate Bill 22.

Governor Granholm signed Senate Bill 22 into law this summer which allows persons with disabilities to work and save for retirement without fear of losing their Medicaid coverage. The "Freedom to Work" law could benefit approximately 140,000 Michigan residents with disabilities whose current income and assets exceed the eligibility threshold for Medicaid. The legislation establishes a program within the Department of Community Health to continue Medicaid

coverage for people with disabilities. Under the program, a disabled person who is Medicaid-eligible could generate earned income in excess of existing eligibility guidelines, and accumulate savings in retirement and individual retirement accounts without losing Medicaid benefits. Persons with disabilities will no longer have to choose between a productive working life and the benefits they need and deserve. I was proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation.

Prohibit Returnable Containers From Michigan Landfills

Senate Bill 177 would prohibit the disposal of returnable beverage containers in Michigan landfills. The ban would include soft drink containers, beer bottles, and wine cooler bottles. Since Michigan has a bottle return policy, these items only enter the waste stream when they are

imported in another state's or country's trash. Since federal law prohibits us from banning all imported trash, this bill offers a way to at least reduce what enters our landfills. This bill is in the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs awaiting a hearing.



Important State and Federal Consumer Protection Legislation

Do-Not-Spam Initiative

The Senate unanimously passed a bill in June to combat junk e-mails, or spam. This legislation will require spam senders to give recipients a way to get out of receiving any more of its unsolicited e-mails and requires senders to put an "ADV:" prefix on all of their messages, among other requirements. The bill also allows prosecutors and the



attorney general to go after violators with criminal charges or civil action. There is no legislative action that can stop all unwanted e-mail messages; however, this legislation provides a way for consumers to exercise some control over the flood of unsolicited e-mails they receive. The Governor signed this bill into law on July 14, 2003.

Prepaid Funeral Arrangements Protected

Senate Bills 512 and 513, recently passed in the Senate, will give greater protection to consumers who pre-pay for funeral goods and services at cemeteries and mortuaries. The legislation requires that funeral homes and mortuaries place monies paid in advance for funeral and/or burial expenses in an escrow account. If the person purchasing the goods or services changes his or her mind in the future, he or she would be entitled to a refund of at least 90 percent of the original payment. The legislation also requires that cemetery grounds and facilities be inspected at least once every three years. These bills have been sent to the Committee on Commerce in the House of Representatives for their consideration.

Registration for "Do Not Call" List Now Open

Consumers can now put their phone numbers on a national "do not call" registry to prevent unwanted telemarketing calls. This legislation, recently passed in the U.S. Congress, makes it illegal for most telemarketers to call a number listed on the registry. Consumers can register for free either online or by telephone. To register online, go to

www.donotcall.gov. To register by phone, call 1-888-382-1222. If you register your phone number by August 31, 2003, most telemarketers must stop calling you beginning October 1, 2003. If you register after September 1, 2003, telemarketers must stop calling three months after you register.

Senator Cherry Attends Policy Academy on Chronic Disease Prevention and Management



Senator Cherry discusses legislation with Senate Democratic Leader, Bob Emerson.

Senator Cherry is one of eight legislators from Michigan selected to attend the Policy Academy on Chronic Disease Prevention and Management that was held in Chicago in August. The Policy Academy is an intensive workshop designed to help states develop statewide action plans for addressing chronic diseases. The forum provided an excellent opportunity to meet with national experts and other state legislators to share best practices and find workable solutions to chronic

health care problems in Michigan. Chronic diseases cost our state a great deal. Not only do they account for a good portion of Medicaid spending every year, but they are also costly in terms of quality of life for our citizens. Many people suffering from chronic illnesses are not able to be active participants in the workforce or their communities. The Policy Academy will help Michigan legislators develop plans that re-establish prevention programs in our state and promote healthy lifestyles.



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Senator Cherry Holds Coffee Hours

Please stop by to share a concern, ask a question, or just have a cup of coffee and chat.

October 6, 2003
Brandon Township Hall
395 Mill Street • Ortonville
8:30 am - 10:00 am

October 20, 2003
Grand Blanc Big Boy
11432 S. Saginaw • Grand Blanc
7:30 am - 9:00 am

Check my website frequently to keep updated on future coffee hours.



Town Hall Meetings Scheduled “Financing Your Child’s College Education”

Senator Cherry will sponsor two Town Hall meetings this fall. The Town Hall meetings will be on the topic of “Financing Your Child’s College Education.” Featured speakers at both sessions will represent the Michigan Education Trust (MET), the Michigan Education Savings Program (MESP), and other higher education finance experts. The sessions are designed to be informative and interactive. We hope you will plan on attending.



A financial aid representative from the UM-Flint will be present at the following meeting:

September 15, 2003

UAW Local 1292 Hall
6153 S. Dort, Grand Blanc
7:00 pm

A financial aid representative from Oakland University will be present at the following meeting:

September 22, 2003

Covert Center (Woodland Room)
1150 Scott Lake Road, Waterford
7:00 pm

E-mail Newsletter Available



I am currently sending out periodic e-mail newsletters to keep you

informed about what’s going on in Lansing, as well as other important information from around the state. If you would like to receive this newsletter, please send your e-mail address to

**sendcherry@senate.
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and I’ll be sure to add you to our mailing list. Please also visit my State Senate website,

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/dem/deborahcherry>

which will keep you up to date on my activities in Lansing as well as in the district.